LEARNING FROM GOOD EXAMPLES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING IN SLOVAKIA AND FLANDERS. / APRENDER DE LOS BUENOS EJEMPLOS: UN ANÁLISIS COMPARATIVO DE LAS PRÁCTICAS DE LA TRADUCCIÓN E INTERPRETACIÓN EN LOS SERVICIOS PÚBLICOS EN ESLOVAQUIA Y FLANDES.

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Abstract: The article focuses on the translation and interpreting policy in the legal, institutional and public contexts. There are two essential variables to consider when we discuss policy settings for PSIT: the definition of the target groups and the areas within those groups where translation and interpreting are provided. The establishment of PSIT in Slovakia and Flanders took place alongside the creation of rights for official state languages and providing language rights to minorities. In Slovakia, institutionalisation takes place mainly in the legal and public sectors, while community interpreting is a fully unknown and underdeveloped concept. Flanders has developed a well-functioning model of so-called "social interpreting" in recent decades. We compare the provision of translation and interpreting services in sectors delineated as public service interpreting and translation and propose the possibilities for developing and implementing an effective model, based on the Belgian example in Slovakia.

Keywords: PSIT; Minority language rights; Community interpreting; Social interpreting.

Resumen: El artículo se centra en la política de traducción e interpretación en los contextos jurídico, institucional y público. Hay dos variables esenciales a considerar cuando discutimos la configuración de las políticas para el PSIT: la definición de los grupos objetivo y las áreas dentro de esos grupos donde se proporcionan la traducción y la interpretación. El establecimiento del PSIT en Eslovaquia y Flandes tuvo lugar paralelamente a la creación de derechos para las lenguas oficiales del Estado y la concesión de derechos lingüísticos a las minorías. En Eslovaquia, la institucionalización tiene lugar principalmente en los sectores jurídico y público, mientras que la interpretación comunitaria es un concepto totalmente desconocido y poco desarrollado. Flandes ha desarrollado en las últimas décadas un modelo de interpretación social que funciona bien. Comparamos la prestación de servicios de traducción e interpretación en sectores delineados como la interpretación de servicio público y la traducción y proponemos las posibilidades de desarrollar e implementar un modelo eficaz, basado en el ejemplo belga en Eslovaquia.

Palabras clave: TISP; Derechos de lenguas minoritarias; Interpretación comunitaria; Interpretación social.

1. Introduction

Public service interpreting and translation play a key role in providing information from the government in mutual contact with citizens belonging to national minorities, non-native citizens of the European Union and third countries, as well as disabled groups of citizens.

Through public service interpreting and translation, these citizens gain access to information in areas such as social security, healthcare and education. Communication through public service translation and interpreting gives them the opportunity to express themselves fully in a range of court cases, in contacts with the Public Prosecution Service, and when dealing with the police and the migration office. The scope and manner in which such language services are provided are determined not only by the language policy of the country itself, but also by several European and international legal provisions.

The academic definition of PSIT and its delineation in relation to other parallel concepts such as institutional interpreting are unclear (Koskinen, 2014). For the purposes of this paper, the terms *community, liaison* or *social translation and interpreting* can be used interchangebly with *PSIT*. A spectrum of practitioners are working in the context of PSIT: sworn, certified, registered translators and interpreters but also freelancers of volunteers working ad hoc and often without training or certification. One of the reasons are the differences in translation and interpreting policies between the member states of the EU. Since the 1990s, the concept of community interpreting, later defined as public service interpreting[1] has been demarcated as the opposite of conference interpreting, which has traditionally been a major part of interpreter training. The basis for public service interpreting (PSI) was laid at the Canadian Critical Link Conference in 1995, where this type of interpreting was defined as a sub-discipline in the context of law, healthcare and social services. Research focused on interpreting for the police, in hospitals, in asylum procedures, as well as interpreting in sign language.[2] Through these publications, PSIT was established as an independent sub-discipline within Translation Studies.

In Canada, based on initiatives of professional organisations, the so-called National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services[3] was published. Similar activities have also been seen in Australia, the US and later in some European countries in reaction to increasing labour, political and (war) refugee migration. An important step in the definition of domains, competences and certification in public service interpreting was the creation of ISO 13611:2014 Interpreting - Guidelines for community interpreting[4]. High demand for interpreting and translation in criminal proceedings in the EU with a wide variety of standards and qualities of service, and the need to support the interests and concerns of the national associations of sworn interpreters, led to the foundation of the European professional association of legal interpreters and translators in 2007: EULITA. This association was involved in the formulation of a directive of the European Parliament and the European Council on the right to interpreting and translation in criminal proceedings[5] in 2010. Numerous projects[6] have focused on legal interpreting and appropriate training, research, and the quality of legal translation. One of EULITA's initiatives is the formulation of a new ISO-norm on legal translation and interpreting that should clearly establish and delineate this specialisation vis-à-vis that of public service translation and interpreting (PSIT).[7]

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[1] See A. Corsellis (2008) and S. Hale (2012).

[2] Subsequently, several breakthrough academic collections and articles on this subject were published. The first publications on the subject of CI are based on Susan Berk-Selingson's *Bilingual Courtroom* (1990) on interpreting before courts in the United States. Basic publications that have defined the concept of CI are attributed to Hale (2004, 2007); see also Kainz, Prunč and Schögler (2011), Wadensjö (1992), Kadrić (2008), Mikkelson (1999), or Di Meglio (2011).

[3] http://www.saludycultura.uji.es/archivos/HIN_National_Standard_Guide_for_CI_(Canada).pdf

[4] https://www.iso.org/standard/54082.html

[5] See Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32010L0064.

[6] For an overview see http://eulita.eu/wp/european-projects/.

[7] For further information on the initiative of developing an ISO standard for legal translation and interpreting, see: https://www.iso.org/standard/69032.html

The logical next step was to formulate recommendations to the European Commission concerning a common European legislation and funding policy in the sector of PSIT. Therefore, the Belgian organisation Junction Migration-Integration initiated the establishment of ENPSIT[8] in 2013. ENPSIT encourages relevant stakeholders to work towards a unified European framework of public service interpreting and translation.

The guarantee of language services for diverse groups in society speaking a language other than the official state language has been the subject of interdisciplinary research and the spectrum of aspects studied is very broad. It concentrates on the examination of citizens' language rights in the public sector, the scope, manner and quality of the provision of translation and interpreting services in sectors and domains offering public services, through to the evaluation of translation and interpreting output. Attention is also paid to the asymmetry of power, the person of the interpreter and translator, the method and opportunities for lifelong learning of interpreters and translators, and the extent and effectiveness of the use of accessible language technology in this communication sector. Also the ethical aspects of this type of communication are very important. For translation and interpreting policies governed by the state, two variables turn out to be essential by setting the rules for PSIT: the definition of target groups and the domains (legal and administrative or also medical, educational or other) where translation and interpreting are provided.

In this article we will focus on these two variables, comparing the current state of public service interpreting and translation in two small and traditionally multilingual countries with historically anchored ethnic minorities, but facing newer challenges about migration movements at the same time as well: Slovakia and Belgium. Both countries have had wide-ranging discussions regarding language policy, use of state languages and quite different situations regarding labour and refugee migration. While the concept of community interpreting is relatively unknown and underdeveloped in Slovakia and is not used in the practical provision of translation and interpreting services by the state authorities, in Flanders the so-called *social translation and interpreting* (as a literal translation of Dutch *sociaal vertalen en tolken*, which largely amounts to public service interpreting and translation) is a fully institutionalised and functioning system of translation services for non-Dutch/French-speaking citizens. We will compare the provision of translation and interpreting services in domains relevant for public service interpreting and translation and propose opportunities to develop and implement an effective model in Slovakia based on the Belgian example, where we focus on the northern, Dutch-speaking part of the country (Flanders). following the research of Ozolins, stating that:

> Quite separate infrastructures and approaches mark Belgium, for example, where Flemish organisations have developed now quite extensive language services (…) but where language service infrastructure is far less developed in French-speaking Wallonia (Ozolins, 2010: 197).

2. Minorities and migration – variables underlying the need for PSIT in Belgium and Slovakia

In this section we describe how language services are provided in the public sector, by defining the target groups and the legal framework for the provision of public service interpreting and translation in Flanders (Belgium) and Slovakia, starting from the historical development of the provision of language services for non-native-speaking populations in both countries.

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[8] See the ENPSIT website to consult its history at http://www.enpsit.org/.

2.1 Defining possible target groups of PSIT in Flanders: migration overview

If we want to gain an insight into the development of PSIT in Belgium, with our main emphasis on the Flemish context, it is useful to take a closer look on the migration movements that are typical in the Belgian context, and which have caused language diversity. Contrary to the phenomenon of migration itself, the attention paid to migration in historiography and the description of the migrant´s view in Belgian history are relatively young (see for example Morelli, 1993). In Belgium, the relations between language and politics have mostly been defined through difficult relations between the two main language communities. The division of Belgium into language areas is based on the principle of territorialism, which forms the foundation of the Belgian language policy. In Brussels, however, the "person principle" applies: inhabitants of Brussels can choose freely between Dutch or French. The principle of territorialism means that the administrative language is determined by the language of the area in which an official administration is located or where the contact with this administration takes place. Therefore, clearly geographically marked language areas are fundamental to the correct application of the language policy (vanden Boer, 2009). The Belgian state structure developed quite a dichotomous French- versus Dutch-speaking language policy, with little attention given to other minority language issues[9]. Witte and van Velthoven (2010: 191) state that international immigration movements with economic and/or political migrants had little impact on language policy until after the nineteenth century, because their numbers were so small. They simply assimilated into the larger Dutch (Flemish) and French language communities. In the north of the country (Flanders), they either learned Dutch or strengthened their French-speaking presence; in Brussels they usually learned Dutch as well and in the south of the country (Wallonia) they generally assimilated into the French-speaking community.

It is only after the Second World War that we can speak of migration which also had a real impact on language and integration policies. Not only did migration prove to be much more diverse, it was also much more substantial. Witte and Van Velthoven (2010: 191) add that Belgium was embedded in a process of globalisation and Europeanisation and gradually evolved into one of the most open economies in the world, with Brussels as its cosmopolitan centre. Gaus (1992: 111-112) emphasises the typical term *gastarbeiders* (guest labourers) and speaks of a "wave" of migrants immediately after the war of around 300,000. It is remarkable that he mentions an unequal regional distribution of migrants in his data in a census from 1987 in the three regions of Belgium, with about 44% migrants in Wallonia, 30% in Brussels and 27% in Flanders. The composition of migrants also changed in the course of the second half of the twentieth century. In the post-war decades until the 1970s, economic migrants were mainly brought to Belgium by government initiative. These were mainly low-skilled workers for the Walloon industry (Witte and Van Velthoven 2010: 192). At first they were mainly Italians and Poles, but later on agreements were settled with Morocco, Turkey, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Yugoslavia. These workers initially came to Belgium to work, but after a while they settled there with their families under the laws on family reunification. Labour migration still exists, of course, and is now mainly extended to migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (Myria, 2018: 20).

Labour migration is not the only source of migration. There is also a group of migrants who are political refugees. Apart from political reasons to flee their country, war also causes

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[9] Vanden Boer (2009), for example, even mentions that most Belgians tend to see the German-speaking Belgians as „the best protected minority of Belgium". However, her research showed a large gap between theoretical legislation and practical outcome in applying the language policy concerning German. More on the historical development of the linguistic situation in Belgium concerning the main language communities is to be found in Vogl and Hüning (2010).

refugees to look for safer places, so recent events such as the war conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, but also in Somalia and Eritrea made for significant asylum seeking migration. In a report Myria, the Belgian Federal Centre of Migration, mentions for example Syrians as the fourth most significant group of newcomers in 2016. They also point out that about 56% of registered migrants in 2016 came from the European Union (Myria, 2018: 20). The next group of migrants is affiliated with international institutions that chose Belgium (and more specifically Brussels) as their headquarters, such as NATO (after the departure of its institutions from Paris), the European Union, and many international companies (Witte and Van Velthoven, 2010: 192), which also created a community of expatriates and diplomats and therefore also another migrant community. This group consists mainly of highly educated workers.

These rather diverse processes of migration initially changed the image of the larger cities (Witte and Van Velthoven, 2010: 193), most drastically in the Flemish city of Antwerp, but smaller regional cities such as Leuven and Roeselare now also have a considerable number of migrants. In Leuven this is partly due to its status as a university city with a good international reputation. In the province of Limburg, in the eastern part of Flanders, we still find remnants of the old labour migration, with Italians, Poles, Moroccans and Turks in particular, while in the north of Flanders, Dutch expats settled mainly for tax reasons. In Wallonia, there has been a tradition of assimilation for some time now, and this has largely happened with the Flemish, Italians and Poles. In Brussels, migration most significantly changed the dominant language policy paradigms. Witte and Van Velthoven (2010: 193-194) mention that one in three inhabitants in the capital are migrants and describe how migration is spreading to the Brussels *banlieue*, the outskirts of the capital, significantly in small cities around the capital. This migration overview explains a part of the language diversity of Belgium, which creates a need for public service interpreting and translation. We of course need to take into account that the different kinds of migration will affect the language service provision differently in different regions and language areas. In the case of Brussels, a more complex language policy will have to be adopted whereas in smaller cities such as Leuven or Roeselare, only one of these types of migration will affect the language policy and hence the provision of PSIT.

2.2 Slovak context

Slovakia is one of the smallest countries in the European Union with about 5.5 million inhabitants. Because of its geographical location and history, Slovakia has always been a multilingual country, where nine recognised national minorities currently live. Originally the territory of the Slovak Republic belonged to the Double Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. After the Second World War and the dissolution of this monarchy the second Czechoslovak republic came into being, establishing Slovak as the official language of the territory of Slovakia and Czech as that of the territory of the Czech part of the republic (the former kingdom of Bohemia and Moravia). We could compare this with the dichotomous Belgian language model with the Dutch- and French-speaking communities, with the exception of the specific language situation of Brussels and considering the third official language (German) more as a minority language. The Czech and Slovak languages have been comprehensible to the citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic because of their similarity and intensive contact between the two language groups. After the division of Czechoslovakia and the creation of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993, the use of languages in the Slovak Republic has been regulated by the *Act on State Language of the Slovak Republic (Act No. 270/1995 Coll.)*[10]. This Act is the basic standard that

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[10] English version: https://www.scribd.com/document/19267068/Act-of-the-National-Council-of-the-Slovak-Republic-No-270-1995-Coll-on-the-state-language-of-the-Slovak-Republic, International legal framework for use of languages of national minorities is contained in the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

determines the use of languages within the territory of the Slovak Republic and stipulates the use of the state language, as well as the rules for using the national minority languages.

The *Act on the Use of Languages of National Minorities* (Act *No. 184/1999 Coll.*) regulates the use of languages of the citizens of the Slovak Republic belonging to national minorities in official contacts, designations and information provision in languages of national minorities. It also sets the rules for the use of the minority language in official contacts and in other fields in those municipalities in which the share of citizens belonging to a national minority reaches 20%.[11] Since these national minorities are guaranteed, the right to disseminate and receive information in their native language, the right to education in their language, and the right to use their language in official contacts, state institutions are obliged to provide translation and interpreting for these citizens (Národnostné menšiny, 2014). The report[12] by the Head of the Government Office on the Use of Languages of National Minorities of 2014 states that there is a big difference in the use of minority languages in contact with the government (Office of the government report, 2014: 1-4). It mentions for example that the citizens lodge applications in a language of national minorities in 56% of municipalities with just a Hungarian national minority, whereas in municipalities with other national minorities such options are limited or do not appear at all (Office of the government report, 2014: 23).

Similar discrepancies in the use of minority languages were also noted during our earlier research.[13] It showed that the volume of interpreting in Hungarian in the legal and institutional context is many times higher than the volume of interpreting in other languages, including English. The situation of Czech is quite different regarding the number of official translations and interpreting assignments, for which hardly any translations are registered. The reason is the affinity of the Czech and Slovak language, the traditionally friendly or fraternal relations between these linguistic communities, and the fact that translations of official documents from Czech to Slovak are not necessarily required and state institutions accept a Czech version of official documents. Roma is not even in the list of languages in which translators or interpreters can be accredited by the ministry of justice. The reason for this situation, given an unofficial statement by the ministry, is that no state institution reported the need for a certified interpreter in this language.

Apart from the numerous minorities, which are a remnant of the eventful history of the territory of the Slovak Republic during the times of the Double Monarchy, there have been no major waves of migration. The most notable groups after the Second World War are the Vietnamese and Chinese communities, which were invited by the government and settled in the era of socialism. The fact that for these languages only 5 certified interpreters are registered at the Ministry of Justice suggests that the provision of translation services to these two groups of migrants was and is underdeveloped.[14]

Since Slovakia's accession to the EU, the number of labour migrants from the EU Member States has grown exponentially. Bratislava has become an attractive target city for multinationals and many foreign companies due to its favourable location between Vienna and Budapest. The strong development of the automotive industry ensures intensive labour

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[11] Based on this Act, there are nine languages of national minorities: Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, Hungarian, German, Polish, Roma, Ruthenian and Ukrainian.

[12] This report is available in English in Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic (2014).

[13] As part of the research of the TRANSIUS project – *From conventions to norms in the legal discourse* (2014-2017), we have carried out a thorough, practice-oriented analysis of public service translation and interpreting, focusing among other things on the scope of translation and interpreting assignments for the individual languages, the number of translators per language, clients, use of translation processes, interpreting techniques, CAT tools, Long Life Learning programmes of translators and interpreters and the degree of standardisation and conventionalisation of the translation and interpreting process. (Project number: APVV-0226-12, https://fphil.uniba.sk/Transius)

[14] See more: https://www.iom.sk/sk/migracia/migracia-na-slovensku.html

migration of workers from beyond the borders of the EU, mainly the Ukraine and Romania. However, Slovakia has not yet developed an institutionalised and functioning model of community interpreting and translation that would help these groups of migrants to integrate into society (see Section 3.1). It is important to stress that, because these nationalities are not recognised as a minority on the territory of Slovak republic by the Act No. 184/1999 Coll., the right to use their language only relates to these communities for communication in criminal proceedings and in cases of refugees in the asylum procedure. Consequently, no compulsory language service is provided in schools, hospitals and other community sectors.

3. Provision of PSIT – the current situation

3.1 Slovak certification of translators and interpretors by the Ministry of Justice

The existing model of sworn interpreting and translation is the only official system of certification of interpreters and translators in Slovakia for the sectors of the law, police, state institutions and public services in general. As mentioned in Section 2, the concept of community interpreting, as defined in Translation Studies over the last 20 years, is an unknown concept in the context of the Slovak Republic. The current legislation has entrusted the registration and administration of court translators and interpreters to the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic. Interpreting and translation services for foreign-speaking citizens on the territory of the Slovak Republic are officially provided by the State through interpreters and translators registered on this list. These are registered according to the current legislation[15] after passing the exam organized by the so-called "interpreting institutes" and the Ministry and after fulfilling certain administrative conditions.

The Register listing the up-to-date information about interpreters and translators is publicly accessible on the Ministry's web page free of charge[16]. The Register lists some 250 interpreters and some 850 translators, covering 36 languages. The law also determines the remuneration, which is fixed for government bodies. The law further specifies the minimum requirements for the training and other administrative and personal criteria (such as education or a clean criminal record), the manner of certification, as well as sanctions in the event of infringement of the requirements. The law gives detailed information about the identification symbols of certified interpreters and translators, such as an official stamp and identity card, and outlines the formal layout of the translation. It also provides for some ethical aspects such as confidentiality and possible reasons for refusing a particular assignment.

In some countries of Central Europe, such as the Czech Republic, sworn translation and interpreting are united in one concept, whereas in other countries, such as the Slovak Republic, interpreting and translation are separated. In practice, the professions of sworn interpreter and translator are complementary. Depending on the procedural circumstances, the interpreter is asked to provide, in addition to interpreting or translation, a written or oral summary of the source communication or to prepare an assessment report on the performance of a colleague.

As a result of labour migration (see Section 2.2), expanding business activities and development of cooperation, the demand for translation from and into less common languages is increasing. Market research, concerning translation services in Central Europe, as part of the

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[15] The activities performed by interpreters and translators in Slovakia are regulated by Act No. 308/2007 Z.z. and its implementation regulations amended by Act No. 65/2018, Decree No. 490/2004 Z.z. regulating the performance of Act. No. 382/2004 Z.z. on expert witnesses, interpreters and translators and on amending certain laws, and Decree No. 491/2004 Z.z., on the remuneration, compensation of the expenses, and compensation for the lost time of expert witnesses, interpreters and translators.
[16] See https://obcan.justice.sk/infosud-registre/-/isu-registre/zoznam/tlmocnik

Transius project, specifically in the Czech and Slovak Republics, has shown that the intensification of trade contacts and labour migration within the European Union has led to the highest demand ever for translation and interpreting services, particularly in the field of public service and legal interpreting. This tendency may not be reflected in the number of qualified translators and interpreters for languages including Dutch, Chinese, Turkish, Finnish, Vietnamese, Hebrew, Japanese and others. There is only a very limited number of qualified interpreters and trained language specialists available on the market in this field.[17] The lack of qualified sworn interpreters and translators might have a direct impact on the actions of an investigation, the public prosecutor's office, the courts, social services and on the quality of healthcare, where no translation and interpreting services are provided. This significantly complicates the working and living conditions of labour workers and migrants.

The lack of a sufficient number of professional interpreters for a wide spectrum of languages also results from the fact that there are no training courses in Slovakia for court or community interpreters who do not hold a translation or interpreting degree but are specialists in another discipline and simultaneously have a good knowledge of a foreign language. Interpreting for government bodies such as courts, police and the migration office, is carried out in specific conditions, which, apart from consecutive interpreting, require the use of other interpreting techniques such as chuchotage, sight translation, summarizing the contents of a document, interpreting via a third language, videoconference interpreting and interpreting by telephone. These specific conditions require professionally skilled or trained people, unfortunately not available at the moment.

Very little attention is paid to the special circumstances of interpreting for asylum seekers and migrants.[18] Interpreters do not receive special training or guidance but they often work ad hoc and have no training. The existing legislation should therefore be amended in order to meet the needs of the present situation in the public sector to improve the quality of the performance of individual translators and interpreters, e.g. in the field of life-long education and the stricter supervision of the performance of translators and interpreters, and the commissioning of translators and interpreters who are not listed in the Register.

3.2 Inspiration from the Belgian-Flemish case – the Belgian organizational framework of PSIT

The organisational structure of PSIT in Belgium and Flanders in particular has changed considerably in recent years. This is partly due to the sociopolitical situation and the complicated state structure of Belgium as a federal state. The integration and reception of newcomers, including PSIT, became an exclusive competence of the three language communities (Flemish, French- and German-speaking), having their own decisive political power on some issues, since as early as the state reform of 1980 (Xhardez, 2016).

The competence for the integration of migrants in Belgium is attributed according to the following scheme. In the northern (Dutch-speaking) part of the country, the Flemish Community has been competent since 1980. In the south of the country the Walloon Region has been in charge of the integration of migrants in the French-speaking part since the state reform of 1993, and the German-speaking Community is competent for the German-speaking part.

The development of PSIT in Belgium and Flanders can be traced back to two independent professionalising movements, one initiated by the Flemish government and PSIT stakeholders, later on one initated by Federal policy. The first impulse in defining the needs of PSIT in

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[17] See the statistic research on the number of orders per language in comparison with the number of registered translators and interpreters realised by the project TRANSIUS (available at https://fphil.uniba.sk/Transius)

[18] Interesting results from a field research on interpreting in the asylum procedures can be found in Tužinská (2009, 2011).

Flanders started from the establishment of the Flemish Telephone Interpreting Service in the 1980s. Furthermore, a report on the current state of the field in 2003 (Hertog et al., 2003) led to the establishment of the COC, the Central Support Service for Community Interpreters and Translators, a platform with the clearly defined assignment of implementing the findings of this report. Within COC a group of experts on PSIT defined a vision on the needs of PSIT, the educational and certification framework structure, a financial outline, and tariffs system.

In 2004 the federal non-profit organisation FOSOVET-COFETIS (Federal Consultation on Social Translation and Interpreting – Coordination Fédérale de Traduction et Interprétariat sociale) was set up (SeTIS, 2004). This initiative brought together 20 Brussels, Walloon and Flemish organisations and stakeholders in order to coordinate the provision of public service interpreters and translators at that time. It was also to be an international point of contact and debate, and was to develop joint initiatives in the field of uniform rates, registration, training, certification, professionalisation (e.g. the creation of terminology lists), conventions, code of ethics, and recognition of the profession of social interpreter and translator. As an initiative trying to stimulate the development of a future perspective for social interpreters and translators, FOSOVET existed as a non-profit organisation for five years before being closed down in 2009. During those five years, the organisation had become successful: at the regional political level, the profession of social translator and interpreter had officially been recognised as a profession, thanks to the well-prepared talks of the FOSOVET-platform. More importantly, the establishment of further European cooperation, in the end leading to the foundation of the ENPSIT-network in 2013, proved to be the right approach for building a well-established PSIT organisational structure in Flanders.[19]

This organisational structure of PSIT-provision was considerably streamlined as a result of decisions at the political level to redistribute powers between different levels of government. The former 14 services of PSIT-provision in Flanders were restructured into 9 services, followed by another restructuring movement in 2015. From then on, the Flemish Agency for Integration (Agentschap voor Inburgering en Integratie, shortened to AGII) would centrally coordinate public service interpreting and translation for Flanders, except for those targeting one of the three major cities – Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels – due to the specific PSIT needs (Xhardez, 2016).[20]

Centralising the integration policy seems a good idea to guarantee uniformity of all modes of PSIT, but in practice, for example in the Brussels context, it has nevertheless led to problems. Xhardez (2016) states that the Brussels non-profit organisation *Brussel Onthaal* has been claiming its own specific context since 2004. Brussel Onthaal provides a PSIT service working with volunteers, but also works with certified interpreters and translators.

3.3 The Belgian/Flemish legal framework of PSIT

Many organisations that are reluctant to use an interpreter in their daily communication with foreigners and migrants are faced with questions about the legal framework, unfamiliar with the exact circumstances under which they are entitled to the help of an interpreter or translator. In theory, the situation is simple. Both within the government (between civil servants, between services), and in contacts between the government and citizens, communication in Flanders must take place in Dutch. For Brussels, more specifically the Brussels-Capital Region, but also

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[19] More on this profile can be found in SERV (2008). See the ENPSIT website to consult its history at http://www.enpsit.org/

[20] As a result of this restructuring, the Flemish Agency for Integration has been in a negative light in the media since 2015. There were reports of 170 original dismissals within this agency (NN, 2017), later there were reports of a strike and 46 dismissals that had already been planned for three years (Struys, 2018). These reorganizations may also have consequences for the supply and services of public service interpreting and translation in Flanders.

for the so-called facility municipalities, *faciliteitengemeenten*[21], other rules apply: if the citizen requests so, French can also be used in contacts with the authorities.

The brochure of the PSIT Service of the Flemish Agency for Integration (AGII, 2017b) mentions four conditions for using a social interpreter in contacts with citizens:

- The use of a foreign language must serve a special purpose. Either you speak the language yourself or engage a social interpreter or translator, for example, if you want to inform certain target groups who do not understand Dutch about a service. That goal must also serve an important social integrational purpose. For example: public health, (traffic) safety, integration, fighting racism.
- The foreign language can only be used in exceptional circumstances.
- The message in the foreign language is first and foremost also given in Dutch and is only a translation of this message. In other words, a translated message does not contain more information than the Dutch original.
- Fourthly, the message in the foreign language must be intended for a specific foreign-language target audience.

(Authors' translation)

Some broader definitions of PSIT, such as those adopted in the first countries where fully fledged services were introduced such as Canada and Australia, also include court and legal interpreting and translation in the PSIT definition. In Flanders, however, PSIT is limited to contexts that fall within the scope of the government level of the "community" (such as the Flemish Community), and interpretating and translation in a legal/court setting or in asylum settings is a competence of the Belgian Federal Government, not the Flemish Community Government. Idzikowska (2015: 35) states that the Flemish Decree on Civic Integration of 2009 (Vlaamse Regering, 2013)[22] is the legal basis for public service translation and interpreting in Flanders within the framework of a regional integration policy. The Decree regulates the services of public service interpreting and translation exclusively within the framework of integration. The migrants or newcomers themselves cannot request for an interpreter; the public institution must do so. Certified translators and interpreters can receive assignments from PSIT agencies. The decree also provides for the possibility of using a non-certified translator or interpreter if no certified translator or interpreter is available. There is also a service in charge of providing basic public service interpreting and translation training, now a task of the larger Flemish Agency of Integration.

3.4 An example of professionalisation of PSIT in Flanders

In 2015 a good example of professionalisation appeared, when a team of professionals on literacy, integration and multilingualism submitted the so-called GIA report (Devlieger et al., 2015). Their task was to examine the different sectors involved in integration, including PSIT. The report formulated recommendations in order to optimize PSIT services and to guarantee quality control. We consider this report as an important instrument that shows that through quality control using thorough inspections of the provision of PSIT in Flanders, the government tries to keep public service translation and interpreting at a high level in terms of professionalisation. Regular monitoring is important to continue to guarantee high quality public service translation and interpreting. Through three SWOT-analyses carried out for the different services in the PSIT field, the interpreters themselves as well as the interpreter-users (clients and social workers) provided some concrete recommendations.

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[21] These are municipalities where a language minority from the other Belgian language community (either French-, Dutch- or German-speaking) has the right of communication in its own language.
[22] The 2009 Decree was revised in 2013, but its passages on PSIT remained unchanged.

The report concludes that over the years, and mainly through the centralized Flemish Integration Agency, PSIT services put themselves firmly on the map in terms of professionalisation, quality assurance and institutionalisation by offering a pre-selection test of Dutch for candidate-interpreters and –translators (to find adequate interpreters from the start), basic training in PSIT and certification tests. As the most important strengths of the Flemish public service translation and interpreting service provision, the inspectors report that the training offers quality assurance, the interpreters focus strongly on the code of ethics, the service is highly accessible, and working closely with researchers makes the services better and improves response times and efficiency. (Devlieger et al., 2015: 40-41)

This report, under the auspices of the Flemish Ministry of Education, shows that the PSIT sector is particularly strongly embedded in an institutional framework. However, there are also some weaknesses, namely that the use of interpreters by institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools) is still very arbitrary. In addition, interpreters are sometimes missing for the right languages and the third factor is that the feedback from performance interviews after the interpreting assignments, given by the institution calling for assistance is not always of a high quality. There are also complaints about assignments that could not be carried out, for example because the interpreter did not show up or was not suitable. Some interpreters mention complaints about remuneration. This situation differs according to the interpreting service (e.g. Brussels, Antwerp, and AGII) and also according to the interpreter's experience, and whether they are a volunteer or not (Devlieger et al., 2015: 41).

The report suggests opportunities to make the language and communication policy of PSIT services better known, by promoting the possibilities to the public sector, stimulating training of new interpreters starting with basic courses and promoting remote interpreting through webcam. Finally, the report concludes with a few threats that apply to the PSIT sector in Flanders. It is clear that there is little or no support among social workers. As long as the dominant discourse says that learning the official language, Dutch in Flanders, is paramount to integration, many social workers and services will not realize that for newcomers the use of a public service interpreter, is sometimes unavoidable. Also, there is still too little awareness that reverting to a non-professional interpreter may seem less expensive whereas hiring a professional interpreter can actually be cost-saving. There is too little understanding of the added value of social interpreters (Devlieger et al., 2015: 42-43).

In 2017 the Flemish Agency for Integration AGII announced some important planned changes in its annual report: it wants to work on the standardization of PSIT in Flanders and eliminate the differences between the interpreting services. To this end, it is working on a long-term vision and wants to unite local interpreting services (AGII, 2017a: 70-72). To achieve this, it put forward four strategic objectives:

- to define supply and demand more thoroughly: the target group and the criteria for the application for social translating/interpreting are to be defined and supported by clear criteria for the provision of public service translation/interpreting;
- to develop a structural framework for PSIT training to ensure training is embedded and provides a platform for intervision and training;
- to ensure that there is a uniform and clear pricing and reimbursement framework;
- to ensure that the organisation of service provision from a central approach becomes more local, adapted to local needs on the field.

(Authors' translation)

Another example of a professionalization of PSIT in Flanders is the aforementioned Professional Competence Profile Social Interpreter (SERV, 2008), drawn up under the auspices of the Social and Economic Council of Flanders, and the published code of ethics of a social interpreter (Deontologische code, 2017).

4. Discussion and conclusions – how can Slovakia learn from a good example?

The description of the Slovak context in Section 3.1 shows that regulation in the field of public service interpreting and translation is often not based on rational and objective criteria, does not always follow recent developments in the political situation and the needs of target groups (i.e. migrants, expats, asylum seekers, etc.). In many cases it is non-systematic, non-standardised, based on the political power of some minorities, and based on the unwillingness on higher political decision-making level to provide the service in certain contexts and sectors. For example, there is no provision for interpreting in medical, educational or social welfare settings.

We have mentioned the positive assessment of the state of PSIT in Flanders. A strong institutionalized framework with a range of checks and balances –such as SWOT-analyses, a well-functioning code of ethics, feedback given to the PSIT service after finishing the assignments (see 3.4.)– ensures constant monitoring of the service processes. This has provided a better organized situation concerning training, matching supply and demand, uniform pricing policy and a process of centralization but at the same time maximally trying to adapt to local needs. Based on the comparison of the Slovak and Flemish approach to PSIT, we pointed out some crucial aspects of the PSIT services in Slovakia that deserve further attention:

- Slovakia lacks an accredited specialized institutional training system for PSIT translators and interpreters, in particular in combinations of Languages of Limited Diffusion, especially for languages not sufficiently represented in the Central European region. The existing courses for court interpreters and translators are focused on the knowledge of some partial areas of the legal system, such as the contents of the Act regulating the exercise of translation and interpreting activities for the needs of state authorities. Other regulations are also included with some attention paid to the ethical aspects of the translator´s and interpreter´s work, and the foundations of technical translation. Interpreters and translators are relatively isolated in their work depending on their personal contacts and self-education.
- Slovakia lacks an institutional framework of PSIT that would distinguish legal/court interpreters and translators from those in the medical, social and educational domains. We consider this as a useful distinction, since different forms of migration require other approaches a different kind of institutionalised framework. Specific attention might for example be paid to translation and interpreting services in asylum procedures, because they will require further standardised procedures in the future. An institutionalised framework would ensure a standardised procedure of certification (see our first point) and evaluation of translators and interpreters in line with the aforementioned training framework and should offer an effective organisational structure that ensures the provision of the needed PSIT services.
- Standards of professional ethics of translators and interpreters should be elaborated and their rights and position should be defined with respect to government agencies and other parties requiring translation or interpreting services. Actual practice tends to suggest that public services that make use of translators or interpreters often have no idea of the tasks of the translator and interpreter, do not know what they may require and are unable to assess the time needed to produce the translation, or the position of an interpreter in a concrete setting.
- The area of PSIT requires quality control management of the performance of individual translators and interpreters active in the different domains and language

combinations. Starting specialized professional preparation and facilitating targeted trainings are, in our view, the first step towards a professionalised system of quality evaluation, which can consequently be used in practice. Inspired by the latest annual report of the Flemish Agency for Integration AGII, we suggest standardising methods and criteria to evaluate the interpreter´s and translator´s performance at the national level in Slovakia or adopting an international model worked out by ENPSIT and based on Belgian best practice. The quality criteria ought to be registered in official documents and in legislation, to make the translator's and interpreter´s work recognizable as well as being well-monitored, possibly by a government institution in a systematic, and purposeful manner.

The first steps towards the education of public service translators and interpreters in combinations of less common languages have been taken within the Erasmus+ project PACI (Professional, Accessible Community Interpreting)[23]. This aims to create a generally applicable model of intensive training of high quality skills in the field of public service interpreting and translation, striving to use these trainings in practice, to begin with in university curricula with language combinations within philological studies, i.e. linguistics, editor and literature studies. Community/public service interpreting and translation include interpreting and translation in the context of education, social welfare and healthcare situations. In these contexts the project focuses its didactical and training activities on the language combinations of the Central European region (Slovak, Czech, and Polish) and Dutch, as a pilot project model. It is also suitable for other language combinations, since until now no such specialised model has been developed. Intellectual outputs of the project will include specialized e-learning courses and blended learning in combination with guest lectures. These courses will serve as a theoretical background for a summer school aimed at intensive interpreter training and translation competence in relevant terminological topics and settings. The digital form of the outputs ensures the sustainability, flexibility and accessibility of the project to reach out to a wide audience of interested training institutions and students also outside Central Europe.

Our comparison of the situations in two small multilingual EU countries shows that the provision of language services to non-native speakers can be dealt with very differently. The degree of institutionalisation is closely linked to the position of PSIT' target groups in society, the tradition of certification and training of translators and interpreters, as well as the interest of public institutions in the quality of language services. It is clear that a systematic approach at a supranational level, sharing experience, knowledge, ethical principles and practical approaches, can make a major contribution to all countries concerned. It can also help to recognise, and, in cooperation with NGOs and educational institutions, take measures to implement effective models of PSIT delivery with a view to quality, solidarity and safeguarding human rights.

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[23] Erasmus+ project PACI, project number 2017-1-SK01-KA203-035412. See more at www.kgns.info/paci.

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